

BEWARE OF DC-TALK

Updated August 11, 2003 (first published May 2, 2002) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The Christian rock group dc-Talk was formed in 1989 by Toby McKeehan, Michael Tait, and Kevin Max, students from Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. The name dc-Talk is a reference to their home town, Washington, D.C.

In 1997, dc-Talk became the first rock band to win a Dove Award. Their album "Jesus Freak" sold 85,000 copies the first week.

Toby wears two ear rings and has long hair. Their interviews contain offensive and vulgar words such as "crappy" and "freaking." The Bible says we should use only "sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:8).

The three met at the charismatic Heritage USA when Falwell was attempting to rescue the PTL Club after Jim Bakker was arrested. The origin of this rock group, therefore, is related to the compromise of Jerry Falwell in associating with the worldly/unscriptural PTL Club. After dc Talk was formed, they were allowed to sing at a Liberty University chapel service (*Calvary Contender*, July 15, 1991).

In 1991 Falwell stated: "During Toby, Michael, and Kevin's tenure at Liberty University, it was obvious to me that God had great plans for these three young men and their powerful program..." (*Calendar* magazine, Spring/Summer 1991, p. 8). Terry Watkins observes: "That's quite a statement by Brother Falwell, considering that Kevin was kicked out of Liberty for a 'drinking' problem!"

The group was praised in Falwell's June 1996 *National Liberty Journal*: "This year's top artists are Liberty University's own dc Talk, whose *Jesus Freak* CD experienced never-before-seen sales figures for gospel music." In April 1996 hard rocking dc Talk drew the largest concert crowd in the history of Falwell's university.

In an interview with *CCM Magazine* about their 1998 album, *Supernatural*, the members of dc Talk described their objective in these words:

"We are not ministers,' says McKeehan. 'DC TALK IS A BUSINESS, but in the midst of our business, we pray that God ministers to people through our lives. Max adds, 'DC TALK IS AN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP. But when you dig deep into what we do or you dig into what we say, therein lies where the Holy Spirit interacts with the people' (emphasis added) (April Hefner, "Supermen," *CCM Magazine*, October 1998, p. 38).

Michael Tait admits that he loves the “look at me” aspect of rock. “I’ve always wanted to be the front guy of a band of guitar-toting, drum-slinging rock ‘n’ rollers because my personality is one of such flamboyancy and energy. Rock ‘n’ roll embodies and exudes all of that” (*CCM Magazine*, May 2001, p. 43). Kevin Max also admits that they are self-possessed with their music, just like secular rockers: “As a performer, you’re constantly neurotic about what you look like, how you’re performing on stage, what you come off like to the public” (*Ibid.*, p. 44).

DC-TALK AND THE WORLD

Some of dc Talk’s musical role models are the Beatles, David Bowie, and The Police, all of which are wicked secular rock groups. Kevin Smith admits that he listens to mostly secular rock music (*Flint Michigan Journal*, March 15, 1996, p. B19). dc Talk opened its “Jesus Freak” concerts with the Beatles’ song “Help.” They also perform other secular rock songs at their concerts, including drug inspired “Purple Haze” by Jimi Hendrix. Toward the end of their concerts they played the rock song “All Apologies” by the secular rock group Nirvana, formerly led by Kurt Cobain. Terry Watkins notes: “Kurt Cobain is one of the worst ANTICHRIST blasphemers since John Lennon. Kurt Cobain decorated his home with blood-splattered baby dolls hanging by their necks! The inside of Nirvana’s album *In Utero*, which is the album dc Talk got ‘All Apologies’ from, has pictures of chopped up babies! Cobain ran around his neighborhood spray-painting, ‘ABORT CHRIST’ and ‘GOD IS GAY.’ Cobain’s first band was called ‘Fecal Matter.’ Cobain killed himself a couple of years ago” (Watkins, *Christian Rock: Blessing or Blasphemy?*). During their 1999 “Supernatural Experience” tour, dc Talk performed “Hello Good-bye” by the Beatles, “Jesus Is Just Alright” by the Doobie Brothers, “Give Peace a Chance” by the late New Ager John Lennon, “That’s the Way I Like It” by the Sunshine Band, and “Le Freak” by Chic (*CCM Magazine*, April 1999, p. 55).

dc-Talk hired Simon Maxwell to produce their “Jesus Freak” video. Maxwell was hired because dc-Talk had seen his work with the antichrist rock group Nine Inch Nails. Toby McKeethan said that Maxwell’s “style appealed to us” (*Billboard*, Nov. 11, 1995). The Maxwell-produced Nine Inch Nails video *Closer* features a monkey crucified on a cross! Nine Inch Nails lead singer Trent Reznor backs the satanist group Marilyn Manson, which has a blasphemous album titled “Antichrist Superstar.”

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

The members of dc-Talk admit that they want to push the envelope with their music and videos. Following is the stated goal with the video *Jesus Freak*: “The intention of the clip was to ‘push the envelope’ of the Christian music community ... they expect some of the more conservative members of the Christian community to frown on the adventurous clip” (*Billboard*, Nov. 11, 1995).

The members of dc-Talk do not belong to any organized Christian denomination or church affiliation.

dc-Talk's antagonism toward biblical fundamentalists is evident in their music. The song "Time Ta Jam" on their 1989 debut album contained the following insolent lyrics:

"So hyper fundi, don't be dismayed! Check out the lyrics when the record is played."

In other words, dc-Talk is mocking biblical fundamentalists ("hyper fundi") who are opposed to the use of rock music. They are saying that only the message matters. The hypocrisy of this view is evident by the fact that the message presented by dc-Talk often is obscured by their heavy rock music. Further, the message is frequently abstract. Note the following example from "Mind's Eye"—

"You know what I'm going through/ I know (that) it's true/ Cause you've stood in my shoes/ Desire's inside of me/ But, it's hard to believe/ In what you cannot see/ Can you catch the wind? See a breeze? Its presence is revealed by/ The leaves on a tree/ An image of faith in the unseen/ In my mind's eye/ I see your face/ You smile/ As you show me grace/ In my mind's eye/ You take my hand/ We walk through foreign lands/ The foreign lands of life/ In my mind/ I'm where I belong/ As I rest in your arms/ And like a child I hold on to you/ In my moment of truth/ We can ride the storm/ Endure the pain/ You comfort me in my hurricane/ And I'll never be alone again/ ... In my mind I can see your face/ Love pours down in a shower of grace/ Life is a gift that you choose to give/ And I believe that we eternally live/ Faith is the evidence of things unseen/ People tell me that you're just a dream/ But they don't know you the way that I do/ You're the one I live to pursue" ("Mind's Eye," dc-Talk).

Nothing is clear about this message. Who are they talking about? Jesus? They don't say. It could just as easily be about Krishna or Buddha. The listener could easily fit any false god into this song. If the song is about Jesus, what Jesus? The true Jesus of the Bible or one of the myriad of false christs in the minds of those who hear dc-Talk's music? The song speaks of living eternally, but there is no clear Gospel message so that the hearer can know how to have eternal life. In fact, this dc-Talk song could be about a girl, a lover. There are secular rock songs which have a similar message.

DC-TALK FREAKS

Notice how dc-Talk describes John the Baptist:

"There was a man from the desert with naps in his head/ The sand that he walked was also his bed/ The words that he spoke made the people assume/ There wasn't too much left in the upper room/ With skins on his back and hair on his face/ They thought he was strange by the locusts he ate/ The Pharisee's tripped when they heard him speak/ Until the king took the head of this Jesus freak" ("Jesus Freak," dc-Talk).

To dc-Talk, John the Baptist was a strange Jesus freak! A freak is a term popularized during the hippie era of the 1960s and '70s. It referred to a drug using counter-culture rebel. dc-Talk claims that they use the term merely to refer to an "enthusiast," but that is

not how the term has been used in American society during the past four decades. I know the term well, because I was a “freak” before I was saved. I was proud of the term “freak” because it described my corrupt lifestyle. To apply this term to a John the Baptist is foolish. The term freak implies rebellion, but the Christian is called to submission not only to God but also to parents and employers and church and government. Freak implies dissatisfaction, but the Christian has found complete satisfaction in Jesus Christ. Freak implies resentment toward life, but the Christian has faith that God is in complete control of his life. Christians are not freaks, and the venerable John the Baptist, who was exalted by Jesus Christ as the greatest man who ever lived, was not a freak.

In 2001, the truth came out that at least some members of dc-Talk had truly lived the “freak” lifestyle even while they were pretending to be an example of holiness for their young Christian fans. After their success with the *Supernatural* album and tour, Michael Tait admits that he “went through a time where I dabbled in a lot of [wicked] things” (*CCM Magazine*, May 2001, p. 42). He calls this his “dark days.”

DC-TALK AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Dc-Talk’s Kevin Smith joined Roman Catholic Kathy Troccoli and 40 other CCM artists to record *Love One Another*, a song with an ecumenical theme: “Christians from all denominations demonstrating their common love for Christ and each other.” The song talks about tearing down the walls of denominational division. The broad range of participants who joined Kathy Troccoli in recording “Love One Another” demonstrates the ecumenical agenda of Contemporary Christian Music. The song witnessed Catholics, Pentecostals, Baptists, etc., yoked together to call for Christian unity.

When Pope John Paul II visited the States in January 1999, dc-Talk and other CCM groups joined hands with hundreds of thousands of Catholics to welcome him. Featured at a Catholic youth rally connected with the Pope’s visit, were dc-Talk, Audio Adrenaline, Rebecca St. James, Jennifer Knapp, The W’s, and the Supertones (*CCM Magazine*, April 1999, p. 12). dc-Talk’s Kevin Max praised the Catholic youth for coming out to hear the Pope, describing John Paul II as “someone with something of substance to say” (*Ibid.*). Each attendee received a rosary with instructions about how to pray to Mary.

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